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29 November 1977

MEMORANDUM TO: Acting Deputy Director for Administration

FROM : Directorate of Administration,
Management Advisory Group (ADMAG)

SUBJECT : Review of the 1976 Opinion Survey

1. At your request the members of ADMAG have reviewed with members of their respective career sub-groups the 1976 Agency-wide opinion survey. This was done to check both the validity of the analysis of the survey as it pertains to the DDA and to see if there have been any changes in the fifteen plus months since the original survey. Emphasis was placed on those areas of the analysis in which you had expressed concern. In some cases this review amounted to a complete re-survey, in others an informal poll on trends and problems was involved. As you instructed, individual office management advisory groups were instrumentally involved in this review.

2. JOB SATISFACTION: The original analysis indicated that lower graded employees (5-8) and new employees did not seem to like the work they were doing as well as others responding. This review did not find that to be a problem. Job satisfaction remains very high in the DDA. Negative replies by lower graded employees in this area seem to be attributed more to a spillover from the areas of job recognition and the chances for promotion which are addressed separately.

3. JOB LEVELS: Mid-level employees (12-13) and those with advanced degrees believed that higher level employees were doing too much lower level work. This review looked at this comment in two ways. First, with shrinking personnel levels and increased workloads plus outside involvement such as over-sight, FOIA, Privacy Act, etc, and shortened deadlines there is a tendency (and necessity) for everyone to pitch-in to the fullest to get the job done. A second possibility for negative replies in this area is a tendency for outstanding workers to retain some of the job skills and functions which were instrumental in promoting them to higher levels after they have reached that level. In neither case did the re-survey find that this area was a significant problem, but perhaps it is just a fact of life and will not change.

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4. CAREER MANAGEMENT: The re-survey indicated that in at least two components that it was felt across the board that the Career Service was not fulfilling its career management responsibilities. New employees, those who lack college degrees, and females expressed less satisfaction with career management. However, we also found that most negative answers in this area were also tied in with those on career counseling and development, promotion possibilities and opportunities for advancement. The people responding negatively in these areas are often in limited career tracks or feel that they do not have a well defined career development path. They can not see much chance for promotion, increased job responsibility, or career advancement without a major change in either the structure of the organization (such as regrading all jobs upward to an absurd level) or in their personal skills inventory (e.g. that elusive college degree). This type of general dissatisfaction is endemic in all organizations and is probably less of a problem here than in the Government as a whole. While not a solution, there is a way to minimize this dissatisfaction. Career counselors do tend to talk with those who have unlimited potential and are in flexible career tracks. However, many respondents felt that the counselor cannot or was not able to help the employee - nothing definitive results from sessions. Increased communication is required to more fully explain organizational realities, advancement and development possibilities and the facts of life regarding changing from inflexible to flexible career tracks to employees in these areas.

5. DDA DEVELOPMENTAL PROFILES: Less than half of the personnel originally surveyed were aware of DDA Developmental Profiles. Although the situation has improved significantly this review found a correlation between negative replies in this area and those in the areas of familiarity with Fitness Report ratings, sub-groups and promotion rankings systems and criteria, and knowledge of the grievance and EEO systems. All organizations have a tendency to publish policy papers or system explanations, assume that all personnel read them, and file them away. Of those employees who EOD later, many never do get the word. Recent revisions in Agency policies have resulted in re-publishing many of these papers and have greatly reduced this "information gap". The situation would be further improved by establishing comprehensive, unclassfied EOD books at the office or even division level for all newly assigned employees to read upon entry. There is no institutional answer to this kind of problem. A greater awareness on the part of supervisors and managers that all employees joining their offices do not have the same experience and knowledge of Agency policies and systems will help.

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6. CAREER COUNSELING AND DEVELOPMENT: In addition to those negative replies in paragraph 4 the original survey noted that employees in the areas located outside the Headquarters building were less satisfied with career counseling and development. This review did find that there is a general feeling that the Agency would be more efficient and in general terms "better" if all offices were located in the Headquarters compound. They also appreciate that this is a virtual impossibility. The solution again as in paras 4 and 5 is to increase communications between counselors and/or supervisors and employees even to the point of locating counselors in the outlying buildings or insuring that a scheduled substantive counseling session be held with each employee at least annually.

7. VACANCY NOTICES: The original analysis noted a general reluctance to reply to vacancy notices on the grounds that it could be detrimental to one's career advancement. This review found this to be a very minimal impression and nothing to corroborate it on the part of supervisors. There was a feeling that the good jobs were never published and that in many cases a person had already been pre-selected even though a notice was issued. The notices are a relatively new phenomenon and over time the employee's perceptions should change. However, management should insure that the notices are treated more honestly and are given timely, systematic distribution throughout the Directorate.

8. TRAINING: Nearly half of the female employees replied to the original survey that they were not able to utilize their training when they returned to their jobs. The re-survey indicated that there was a definite feeling among the lower and some mid-level grades in some career groups that the opportunity to utilize training is still quite limited. However, almost all employees felt that training was a benefit which could help future career development. Clerical employees especially appreciated the opportunity to learn new or enhance old skills or to become familiar with other aspects of the Organization and Directorate. Most employees surveyed felt that whereas training was beneficial, promotion panels had not gone so far as to consider certain courses mandatory for promotion. This lack of rigidity was looked upon favorably.

9. FITNESS REPORTS AND PROMOTION PANELS: The analysis of the original survey indicated that many employees were unfamiliar with Fitness Report rating and promotion criteria. This apparently is still the case. The re-survey continues to indicate a lack or understanding of the criteria used for writing FR's. The question of communications has been addressed in para 5. This review determined that in general the Fitness Report is a very good vehicle for evaluating performance and that the evaluation panel system results in a fairer system for

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promotions. Many did feel the raters could better tie panel criteria into the Fitness Report and expressed a desire that the Report become more of a cooperative effort between employee and rating officer.

10. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY: The original survey found that most employees felt that females were treated worse than other employees. This review could find little evidence of this in the case of female professionals. Any problem in this area was generally related to the clerical track and was not a discriminatory situation. Most employees felt that women have equal opportunity in the Agency with regard to benefits and employment. However, many of the respondents felt that they would"get into trouble" if they were to file a discrimination complaint.

11. QSI'S: The analysis of the original survey noted a feeling that the QSI was not used enough for employee recognition. This review found the Directorate employees feel that the QSI is used less in the DDA than in the other Directorates. It was felt that it should be used more to recognize performance above and beyond the expected for particular effort rather than in lieu of a promotion for long-term performance. In other words, management is not making proper use of the QSI as a means of recognition. There should also be more publicity for all awards including the QSI.

12. GRIEVANCE SYSTEM: The original survey indicated a general lack of familiarity with the grievance system. This review found this to be less of a problem than the original survey might have implied. Most individuals, while unfamiliar with the mechanics of the grievance system, did know where the information could be obtained, if it was ever needed. However, there were some significant gaps which could indicate that the DDA grievance system procedures should be republished.

13. MORALE: The specific areas discussed above do not adequately explain the morale problem that exists in the Agency. The general topics discussed at the end of the original analysis are those that continue to affect the morale more so than systematic procedures. This review found the morale of Directorate personnel lower than it was in 1976. Some was due to external pressures; continued bad press, exposures of classified material, increased outside scrutiny, and the rapid and continual turn-over of top Agency management. More of this may have been due to sympathy for employees in other Directorates due to lack of interpersonal communication, lack of promotions, reorganization, PMCD exercises, or surplus exercises. If we are now entering a time of executive stability it is felt that morale will become stronger. The Agency will never, however, return to the old feeling of an exclusive club, doing its job in a far better fashion than any other Government office. The feeling of intense pride that was so much a part of the old Agency can not be regenerated in a more public Agency, subject to the controls and scrutiny which are the rightful norm of a

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Government office. However, the general feeling is that we will learn to live with this, and continue to place pride in our performance and ability to respond to requirements in a positive manner.

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